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General Comment

[Edited by Gilbert Campbell Scoggin, The University of Missouri.]

The fact that the regular sessions of the American Oriental Society are usually held in the East has made it impossible for many western members to attend, and it was to remedy this situation that it was decided to organize a western division. Therefore in accordance with the action of the Society at its annual meeting last April a committee was appointed to call together Orientalists residing in the West. This first meeting was held at the University of Chicago on January 27. Two sessions were held and several papers of twenty minutes' length were read. These for the most part were strictly oriental; but one paper, by Professor J. E. Wrench, of the University of Missouri, dealt with "The Byzantine Land System."

The American Historical Association held its thirty-second annual meeting in Cincinnati from December 27 to December 30, 1916. On the first day of the session the Division of Ancient History met, having as its chairman Professor W. A. Oldfather, of the University of Illinois. The following papers were presented: "Mesopotamian Politics and Scholarship," by A. T. Olmstead, of the University of Missouri; "Climatic and Geographic Influence upon Ancient Mediterranean Agriculture," by Ellen Churchill Semple, of Louisville, Kentucky; "Tribute Assessments in the Athenian Empire," by Herbert Wing, of Dickinson College. At one of the later sessions Professor Paul Van den Ven, of the University of Louvain, spoke on the subject "When Did the Byzantine Empire and Civilization Come into Being?"

Charles Pomeroy Parker, professor of Greek and Latin at Harvard College, died in Cambridge on December 2, 1916. Professor Parker received his early education at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, and after a brief stay at Trinity College, Hartford, he entered Balliol College, Oxford, graduating in 1876. On his return to America he taught for a time in his old school at Concord, but later became a private tutor. In 1883 he went to Harvard and there he became known to many generations of students, especially in connection with his course in advanced Latin composition, locally known as Latin 7. This course was taken by all candidates for final honors in the classics as well as by many graduates from other colleges who were candidates for the higher degrees. In his teaching Professor Parker displayed a never-failing sympathy and kindness, and he was always ready to listen to suggestions even from the most humble of his hearers.

The distinguished poet and teacher, Rabindranath Tagore, has been lecturing for some time in this country. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature; and perhaps he is the best known of contemporary oriental writers. Among his books are *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *Gītānjali*, *Chitra*, and *Sādhanā*. The last mentioned, which may be somewhat freely rendered "Self-realization," is in prose, and from it the Occidental may get some idea of the famous Hindu Upanishads whose teachings are here set forth. In the first lecture, which takes up the relation of the individual to the universe, are found some interesting remarks on the difference, as it appears to a thoughtful Oriental, between Greek civilization, which "was nurtured within city walls," and that of India, which had its birth "in the forests," where it "was surrounded by the vast life of nature." The West with its feverish excitability and its constant rush and hurry certainly has much to learn from the unruffled calm and self-control displayed by the Hindu philosophers.

The Archaeological Institute of America met in conjunction with the American Philological Association and the College Art Association of America December 27-30 at Washington University in St. Louis. At the first joint session Professor F. W. Shipley presided, and the annual address was given by Professor Carl Darling Buck, the president of the Philological Association, who spoke on "Comparative Philology and the Classics." At a later session Professor Walter Woodburn Hyde discussed "Reconstructions of Olympic Victor Monuments." At the Friday morning session, Professor John Pickard presiding, Professor David M. Robinson spoke on "Some Greek Vases at the Johns Hopkins University." At the afternoon session, Dean Andrew Fleming West presiding, Mr. Stephen N. Luce, Jr., spoke on "Etruscan Architectural Terracottas in the University Museum, Philadelphia," and Mr. T. Lindsey Blayney spoke on "Great Monuments of the Architecture of India." At the evening session Professor John A. Scott discussed "The Close of the *Odyssey*," and Professor Paul Shorey spoke on "Illogical Idiom."

A very commendable step is that taken by some of our state colleges in providing collections of lantern slides to be loaned to the high schools throughout their respective states. Professor Eastman's successful efforts in this direction in Iowa have been noted already in the *Classical Journal*. Professor Josiah B. Game, of the Florida State College for Women, is now prepared to send out over his state the slides made under the direction of Professor Eastman, together with some additional sets. These slides have been arranged under the following heads: "The Roman House"; "Roman Wearing Apparel"; "Roman Games and Amusements"; "Roman Communication and Travel"; "Roman Trades and Crafts"; "Illustrating Caesar's *Gallic Wars*"; "Illustrating Cicero's *Orations*"; "Illustrating Virgil's *Aeneid*"; "Pompeii and Other Roman Cities"; and, in course of preparation, "Athens and Greece." These

slides are sent free of charge except that the school must pay transportation each way and assume responsibility for any breakage. Two sets of fifty slides each are sent together, providing for two different lectures. It is perhaps inevitable that these slides should be illustrative chiefly of Roman life, but we hope that gradually other sets may be added illustrating such subjects as the *Odyssey*, the *Anabasis*, and Greek art.

Professors Canter, Oldfather, and Pease, of the University of Illinois, are actively engaged in the preparation of an "Index Verborum to the Tragedies of Seneca." This work will be based on the text of Peiper and Richter and should be of great use to scholars. Although we have two well-known modern editions of the tragedies, Seneca, on the whole, has been strangely neglected. The proposed index should be a useful aid in any attempt to improve our Senecan text, as well as in the study of the question as to the authorship of the *Octavia*. It has long been an affectation to scorn Seneca and many absurd views are often quoted, usually at second hand. No Latin writer has exerted more influence, directly or indirectly, on English literature, and this fact should assure him a prominent place in our curriculum. The gory scenes for which he is so often censured may easily be paralleled elsewhere. The most awful scene in literature with which I am familiar is from the pen of a very distinguished modern novelist. For many pages we are carried through all the harrowing details of an impalement scene compared with which any passage in Seneca is very tame. Yet I have never heard any criticism brought against the taste of this author. Of course, it is true that the legitimate demands made upon a dramatist may differ from those required of a novelist, but it is also true that Seneca is not the only dramatist to introduce disagreeable scenes. Euripides was familiar enough with the practice of exciting the spectator διὰ τῆς ὀψέως. Seneca, far more than Euripides, has to contend against a great accumulation of traditional prejudice.

In the *Nation* for December 21 Professor John Livingston Lowes, of Washington University, writes briefly on "Chaucer and the Classics." Perhaps no other living scholar is more qualified to speak on the sources of Chaucer. He maintains, as all have heretofore maintained, that Chaucer had a good first-hand knowledge of the Latin classics and used Virgil and Ovid and other writers in the original. But he is equally insistent that Chaucer also used numerous translations and "reworkings" of his classical material. Professor Lowes finds that there were numerous French translations of these works which were widely read in the fourteenth century, and in many cases Chaucer's phraseology more nearly resembles the French translation than it does the original. In the "Legend of Dido" Chaucer used, not only the *Aeneid*, but also the *Roman d'Eneas*, a work of the twelfth century. In the "Legend of Philomela" he drew, not only upon Ovid, but also upon the *Philumena*, which is incor-

porated in the lengthy *Ovide Moralisé*, a work much read in the Middle Ages. Professor Lowes doubts that Chaucer was thoroughly acquainted with Lucan in the original, for he finds greater similarity of statement to an old French prose translation. He thinks that Chaucer's knowledge of Roman history was largely supplemented through the French. Yet he rightly emphasizes the fact that a thorough knowledge of the original is not incompatible with a knowledge of famous translations, and Chaucer was the man to combine knowledge from all sources. Chaucer derived his classical material from the Latin, from the Italian, and, as Lowes believes, far more than hitherto suspected, from the French. "Chaucer assimilated all three, and there are few more important critical problems than the appraisal of the part played by each of the three in the resultant fabric. And to this end every reference in Chaucer's work to the subject-matter of the classics must be scrutinized anew." Obviously research in the field of English requires a knowledge of Latin as well as of modern languages other than English.

"Why did not somebody teach me the constellations and make me at home in the starry heavens, which are always overhead, and which I don't know to this day?" This lament, uttered by Thomas Carlyle, has probably found echo in the mind of many another modern. It is undoubtedly true that general familiarity with the starry heavens was more widespread among the ancients than among us. Of course the poets of all ages have been attracted to the stars, and none more so than the English poets, Milton and Tennyson. Yet it is an interesting comment on modern education that with all the conveniences at the disposal of the modern world, comparatively few students, even in college, are led to avail themselves of this easy access to some slight knowledge of the vast universe of which we form, externally, so small a part. This great fabric assumes a more friendly aspect for him who is able to return a familiar nod of recognition to Vega, Deneb, Capella, Algol, Castor and Pollux, Betelgeuze, Rigel, Fomalhaut, Altair, and numerous other "bright potentates" that sit enthroned in their grand constellations. The Greeks have bequeathed to us the earliest descriptive account of the stars sufficiently accurate for comparison with modern results in astronomical study. Of interest historically is a publication issued in 1915, but only recently distributed, by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, under the title *Ptolemy's Catalogue of Stars; a Revision of the Almagest*. This revision is largely the result of studies pursued by Christian Heinrich Friedrich Peters, long professor of astronomy and director of the observatory at Hamilton College. After Professor Peters' death the manuscript was placed in the hands of Mr. Edward Ball Knobel, a London manufacturer and former president of the Royal Astronomical Society, who had long been interested in the subject and who had already given much help in the work. It is not often that a publication of the Institution makes a direct appeal to the professed classicist; and probably in

this case it will pass unnoticed unless the classical student, like the Watchman at the opening of the *Agamemnon*, be one who ἄστρον κάτοιδε νυκτέρων ὁμήγουριν./ καὶ τοὺς φέροντας χεῖμα καὶ θέρος βροτοῖς/λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι. But this publication is of interest as showing how a well-equipped man of science can go directly to the writings of the ancients and produce results of great value for his fellow-laborers whose linguistic training is restricted. Professor Peters was able to utilize at first hand works written in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish; and he collated numerous manuscripts in the libraries of Europe. Ptolemy's Catalogue of Stars is contained in the seventh and eighth books of his *Μεγίστη σύνταξις* (whence, by prefixing the article *al*, was derived the common Arabic title *Almagest*). The historians of astronomy are inclined to the belief that Ptolemy has merely transmitted, with certain corrections for his own place of observation, the Catalogue of Hipparchus, who lived in the second century B.C. To the Orientalist the *Almagest* is of interest as indicating one of those numerous points of contact between East and West, often easy to surmise but difficult to prove. Ptolemy was translated into Arabic at Bagdad as early as the ninth century, later to pass back from Orient to Occident by a revolution of that familiar mediaeval wheel of fortune which in more cases than one restored to Europe what had been lost. The Latin translation from the Arabic, made by Gerard of Cremona in the twelfth century, long remained Europe's sole source of knowledge of Ptolemy's *Syntaxis*. Not until the fifteenth century was a translation made from the Greek by Georgius Trapezuntius. The Greek text was first printed at Basle in 1538 under the editorship of Simon Grynaeus, being based, according to tradition, on a manuscript once in the possession of Cardinal Bessarion. But no such manuscript is now known to exist. Peters, in his introduction, gives an account of numerous errors that arose in the manuscripts. The unreliability of numerals in our manuscripts is familiar enough, and the corruptions that would creep into a text largely mathematical may easily be imagined. Manuscripts were often the work of mere professional scribes, and well might Roger Bacon complain that the translators did not have a true knowledge either of the languages or of the sciences. Professor Peters, after his long study of many manuscripts, concluded that "the Arabs were altogether more accurate than the Greek scribes." In all there are catalogued and described 1,028 stars, mostly found in the forty-eight constellations commonly known to the ancients.